

PLEASE AMEND THE CLAIMS AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method of forming a bonding pad that is immune to IMD cracking, comprising:
 - providing a partially processed semiconductor wafer having all metal levels completed;
 - forming a blanket dielectric layer over the uppermost metal level;
 - patterning and etching said dielectric layer to form horizontal and vertical arrays of trenches passing through said dielectric layer such that none of said horizontal trenches completely intersects any of said vertical trenches and separating said dielectric layer into cells such that any straight line having points on more than two cells must intersect at least one trench in order to limit the propagation of any cracks that may form;
 - filling said trenches with a conducting material; performing CMP;
 - depositing bonding metal patterns;
 - bonding wires onto said bonding metal patterns;
 - forming a passivation layer.

REMARKS

The examiner is thanked for thoroughly reviewing the subject patent application. Claim 1 has been amended and all claims are now believed to be in allowable condition.

Reconsideration of the rejection of Claims 1, 2, 6-12 and 16-19 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), as being unpatentable over Kida, U.S. Patent 6,313,540, is requested, based on the following argument.